

# **Rutherford County**

## **Work First Plan**

**October 1, 2009 - September 30, 2011**

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## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. Conditions within the County</b>                         | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2. Planning Process</b>                                     | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>a. Planning Committee</b>                                   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>b. Public Comment</b>                                       | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>c. Planning Development</b>                                 | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>3. Outcomes and goals for the County</b>                    | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>4. Plan to Achieve the Outcomes and Goals</b>               | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>5. Administration</b>                                       | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>6. Emergency Assistance</b>                                 | <b>10</b> |
| <b>7. Services to low income families (under 200% poverty)</b> | <b>11</b> |
| <b>8. Services to Non-Custodial Parents</b>                    | <b>11</b> |
| <b>9. Exemption from the Work Requirement</b>                  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>10. Innovative County Strategies</b>                        | <b>12</b> |
| <b>11. Special Issues</b>                                      | <b>14</b> |
| <b>12. Certification</b>                                       | <b>14</b> |
| <b>13. Attachments</b>   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>a. Employment Security Commission MOA</b>                   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>b. Protocol for Family Violence</b>                         | <b>16</b> |
| <b>c. MOA with Rutherford Co. DSS and LME</b>                  | <b>18</b> |

## **1. Conditions within the County**

Rutherford County is located in the Isothermal Belt of Western North Carolina. We are nestled between two of our state's larger metropolitan cities, Asheville and Charlotte, but still enjoying the quiet serenity of a rural community. The current population is 62,886 with a total labor force of 31,803 people as of July 2008. Between the time of September 2007 and September 2008, Rutherford County lost 221 jobs to business closings and downsizing. We currently have 2,560 individuals seeking employment in a county that is offering only 40 jobs as listed through our local Employment Security Commission (as of 9/17/2008). The county offers 1,387 employers ranging from the service industry, manufacturing, medical and mental health agencies, and government employment. The unemployment rate for Rutherford County stands at 8.8 percent as compared to the State's 6.8 percent. On 9/24/08, Hanesbrands Inc. announced that production would immediately cease at the company's knit-fabric textile plant in Forest City, N.C., which has 470 employees. Based on observation and applications completed by individuals applying for the Work First Program, it can be clearly stated that these individuals face specific problems that are compounded by their economical distress. A great many of these consumers have a weak work history and little to no employment skills. This makes it extremely difficult for them to compete with the large number of skilled people seeking employment in our county. This is in addition to the ever present problem of living in the outlying rural community with only the minimum of public transportation available. Our consumers are typically unable to purchase a vehicle and driver's insurance. Therefore, if a job is obtained, they are faced with the possibility of having no transportation to that employment opportunity. Furthermore, Rutherford County has a high average of individuals with substance abuse issues. Although this is not confined to the lower economic stratosphere, it is more prevalent with the population that remains at or below the 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline. This generates a struggle for the consumer and the Work First Social Worker when attempting to locate employment opportunities. Numerous employers have enacted a no-second-chance policy. Meaning, that if a consumer has any drug related charges on their criminal history check they will not be hired. Therefore, we are limited as to where those consumers with drug charges can apply and be hired.

Rutherford County adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which prohibits local government from discriminating against an individual with a disability – it protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability in the services, programs, or activities provided; as well as, establishing the requirements for making programs accessible to individuals with disabilities and for providing equally effective communications. Rutherford County DSS facilities and programs are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Rutherford County DSS provides “qualified interpreters” that have the ability to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially by using any necessary specialized vocabulary methods. Rutherford County DSS maintains a list of individuals that can be contacted to provide sign language services. The agency has a Spanish speaking staff member who can interpret on an as needed basis – in the event this member is not available the agency has contracted with a telephone interpreting service, Fluent Language Solutions. Rutherford County has implemented written policy that provides an outline for additional interpreters and defines the responsibilities that the agency has towards ensuring individuals can communicate effectively.

## **2. Planning Process**

### **A. Planning Committee**

The Rutherford County Planning Committee consisted of the following members:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Christina Blanton    | WIA, JobLink Career Center Coordinator               |
| Beth Archer          | Rutherford County DSS, Work First Employment         |
| Sue Ellen Camden-Lee | Social Workers                                       |
| Penny Brown          |  |
| Eric Wilkie          | Rutherford County DSS, Human Resource                |
|                      | Development and Placement Specialist                 |
| John Carroll         | Rutherford County DSS, Director                      |
| Lorie Horne          | Rutherford County DSS, Program Manager               |
| Chuck Hill           | Rutherford County Board of Commissioners             |
| Debbie Messer        | NC Vocational Rehabilitation                         |
| Denise Clemmer       | Rutherford County DSS, CPS SW Supervisors            |
| Lynn Hoppes          |  |
| Kelly Hudson         | Family Resources, PATH, Director of Shelter Services |
| Mark Snyder          | Rutherford County Schools                            |
| Sandra Miller        | Employment Security Commission, Manager              |
| Susan Hendrick       | Western Highlands Area Authority                     |
| Bill Robertson       | Isothermal Planning and Development                  |
| Helen White          | Rutherford, Polk, McDowell Health Department         |
| Jacqueline Hampton   | Rutherford County DSS, Board Member                  |
| Candice Little       | Henderson Care Center                                |

### **B. Public Comment**

Public review and comment was held September 29<sup>th</sup> to October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 at the Rutherford County Department of Social Services. The public comment period was announced via newspaper.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008 the County Commissioners voted on this plan.

### **C. Planning Development**

The Work First Planning Committee met on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to discuss the plan's development and the process for the continued collaboration and coordination to carry out the plan. Committee members identified the needs of the Work First participants and identified issues to be addressed. Members gave general directions and guidance for the plan. On September 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 the committee received a draft of the plan and was asked for feedback. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008 the group was submitted the plan for approval. The committee approved the plan with some modifications.

This group will continue to meet throughout the two year period to discuss successes, difficulties, and changes that might be useful to the Work First Plan for Rutherford County.

### **3. Outcomes and Goals for the County**

#### **A. Statewide Work First Goals To Be Determined By The State**

1. Employment
2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates
3. Providing Employment Services
4. Benefit Diversion
5. Staying off Welfare
6. Job Retention

#### **B. County Developed Outcome Goals**

1. Employment - Rutherford County's Work First Employment goal is to be determined by the state.
2. Meeting Federal Participant Rates - Rutherford County will meet the all-family participation rate of 50% and the two-parent family participation rate of 90%.
3. Providing Employment Services - Rutherford County will work intensely with 80% of the all family and 100% of the two parent families in employment services.
4. Benefit Diversion - Rutherford County will meet the number of cases through Benefit Diversion that will be determined by the State.
5. Staying off Welfare - Rutherford County will maintain a recidivism rate of 85% of Work First participants who leave for employment.
6. Job Retention - Rutherford County will meet this goal by helping 60% of the Work First population retain their employment at the 6-month mark and 50% to retain their employment at 12 months.

### **4. Plans to Achieve the Outcomes and Goals**

#### A. and B. Activities and Supportive Services

- **Employment**

Work First staff is knowledgeable about all community resources and programs available to our participants. The eligibility staff and the case management staff work as a team to meet the needs of the participants. Work First Staff is knowledgeable and adept at working with and incorporating the six (6) principles of partnerships which are: **Everyone desires respect**; we honor each person we meet with an open mind and heart. We provide an atmosphere of welcome and comfort for our clients at some of the most trying times of their lives and we try to have a positive impact on their self esteem and self worth. **Everyone has strengths**; we highlight the strengths of each client to them. Self esteem is gained by knowledge. At the initial interview we explore avenues that help give them self-determination to identify their own strengths. We understand that we are here for our clients they are not here for us. **Everyone needs to be heard**; we must keep our ears open and listen completely; putting down our pens while the client talks works wonders. We ask them what they want and how they want their life to be

different. From their answers we try to individualize their solutions with them in accordance with the Mutual Responsibility Contract that we must sign with each client.

**Judgments can wait;** with an open mind the clients and the worker can network together to come up with solutions. Putting judgments aside is a great way to begin teaching them to overcome barriers; it is part of becoming self sufficient. **Partners share power;** if both parties share the responsibility the load is not so heavy, if they share the power then no one feels the victim. By helping our clients reconnect with the resources within our community they gain the beginning steps to empowerment and personnel responsibility. **Partnership is a process.** Realizing that the goal is self sufficiency for the client, that together the client and the worker can help bring this family to understand that they are not alone and the community is here to help them for the asking. We empower them to go beyond our doors in strength. Staff refers individuals to Medicaid and to Food and Nutrition Services within our agency. Rutherford County's JobLink Career Center was chartered in 2005 to provide a base of operations and serve as a One-Stop Resource to job seekers and employers of Rutherford County. The WorkFirst/Human Resource Placement Specialist is stationed there part time. JobLink partners provide a representative from their agencies in order to ensure adequate and appropriate staff is available during scheduled hours. This aids us in referring participants to the JobLink when our WorkFirst/HR Placement Specialist cannot be present to help them specifically with their situation. These agencies are listed as follows: Rutherford County DSS, Isothermal Planning & Development Commission, ESC, Isothermal Community College, NCDVRS, Family Resources of Rutherford County. With the current population of Work First individuals having many barriers to employment the cooperation of our agency with the local NCDVRS office is crucial in overcoming some of these barriers. Both agencies provide case management and employment related services. However, NCDVRS also provides Vocational Evaluation; Situational Assessment; Vocational Adjustment Training; and Paid Work Experience to those consumers that meet the eligibility criteria for that agency. Rutherford Life Services provides additional resources for our participants. The services provided include, but are not limited to: job readiness activities; employment activities (paid and unpaid); job placement services; job retention services; and support services. Employment Social Workers will continue to refer participants to our in-house Work Experience Program. A Community Services Program will be developed as a Federal Component that will assist our consumers in reaching the maximum amount of participation within their ability. Through partnership with local non-profit agencies and small businesses, we have been able to establish 14 work sites around the county. These work sites provide valuable employment experience to our consumers and offers them a time to adjust to competitive employment without the threat of termination while they work through issues such as transportation, court interaction, CPS involvement, etc. Our Human Resource Placement Specialist offers job coaching, job placement, and employment readiness classes as regular services to every consumer that is actively participating in our program. Through collaboration with the Employment Social Worker, the HR Placement Specialist is able to assist those consumers who have substantially more barriers to overcome when seeking employment. Other supportive services to our consumer's could include (but is not limited to) transportation stipends, assistance with work clothes, and/or help with the purchase of insurance for a vehicle.

- Meeting Federal Participation Rates

Rutherford County will schedule each participant, brought into the Employment Program, to meet the federal participation rate within the 12-week time requirement. For two parent cases both parents will be brought in within the 12-week requirement. Both will be assessed for at least one of the parents to obtain employment. For all two-parent cases benefit diversion will be explored and utilized whenever possible.

- Providing Employment Services

All participants will be assessed by the Employment Social Work staff to evaluate their employability. The participants will see the Work First Employment Social Worker within the required 12-week period at which time their case will be opened in EPIS. All participants will have some scheduled type of activity that they are required to do or follow through on, even if they are considered disabled. They may be referred to NCDVRS, Mental Health, Social Security Administration, or the local community college for GED or high school class work. All individuals will be assisted with participation expenses as the need arises (i.e. uniforms, transportation, and day care).

- Benefit Diversion

The Work First Employment Social Worker will evaluate and review with each family the nature and benefits of a Benefit Diversion. When eligible, Benefit Diversion will be provided to stabilize the family for a maximum of three months until another means of support can be established. The Employment Social Worker will offer other supportive services such as medical assistance, Food and Nutrition Services, childcare, transportation and child support.

- Staying Off Welfare

Rutherford County will provide transitional services to participants who are no longer receiving Work First, especially for the families that leave Work First for employment. Services will include retention strategies such as case management and crisis evaluation. We will utilize the grant provided through the Department of Transportation to help with transportation issues as applicable according to the Department of Transportation regulations. Work First Employment Social Workers will continue to make appropriate referrals to programs that may assist these families in times of need or in helping them to maintain a working household this will include supportive services from each of the partner agencies and DSS.

- Job Retention

As stated previously, Rutherford County will continue to assist families that leave Work First for employment. All Work First staff is knowledgeable about the programs throughout our county and makes numerous referrals on the consumer's behalf. It is our goal to meet the state recommendation and keep 60 % of our families employed at the 6 month benchmark and 50% of our families employed at the 1 year benchmark. Clearly, this is a daunting task and will be approached through a collaborative team effort from those individuals represented on our Work First Planning Committee, the Work First Employment Social Worker, and the various community resources located in and around

Rutherford County. The Work First Employment Social Workers will continue to utilize retention services, transportation stipends, and subsidized child care offered through DSS to support each family's efforts to remain employed.

## **5. Administration**

### **A. Authority**

The Rutherford County Board of Commissioners, who has authority for the Work First Program, has delegated the administration duties to the Rutherford County Department of Social Services.

### **B. Organization**

When families meet for their appointment, a Work First Employment Social Worker will evaluate the family for Benefit Diversion, Monthly Check, Retention, and/or Emergency Assistance. If the Social Worker feels that the family should apply for Benefit Diversion or for the monthly assistance check, the family is assisted by that Social Worker with the completion of the necessary paperwork. If retention or emergency assistance is chosen then the Work First Employment Social Worker works with the family in order to relieve the emergency. When a family has applied for a Work First monthly check, they will register at First Stop within twelve days of their application date. Referrals are also given for food assistance and Medicaid if the family is in need. Once an application is made for Work First, a child support referral is made to the child support unit at approval. Child Care referrals are provided during the intake and assessment appointment to minimize the wait time for the consumer. Once a Child Protection Service Social Worker or an In Home Social Worker recognizes a need for a family who is not receiving Work First, they contact the designated Work First Employment Social Worker to set up an appointment for that family to obtain an assessment. Likewise, Work First Employment Social Workers are involved in Family and Children Team meetings to ensure that every family has the opportunity to receive information regarding the Work First program. Cases that are held in common between Work First and Child Protective Services are assisted with both Social Workers making home visits and sharing plans in order to better serve the family.

Rutherford County participates in the JobLink Career Center located in Forest City. HR Placement Specialist is co-located one half day per week at the Center. The Employment Security Commission provides employment case management staff. NC Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Isothermal Community College, the Department of Labor, Rutherford Life Services, Rutherford County School System and Workforce Investment Act representatives are also present.

At case re-determinations, the Work First Employment Social Worker will assess the case for continuing eligibility for cash assistance.

The Work First Employment Social Worker will work intensely with priority cases including two-parent households and families who have used 18 of their 24 months and



40 of their 60 months. Bi-weekly reviews will be conducted on all Work First Employment cases for continued employment services including child care and transportation services.

**C. First Stop**

The point of registration in Rutherford County for the First Stop Employment program shall be at the office of the Employment Security Commission located in Forest City. (See attachment I - Memorandum of Understanding signed 9-19-08.) Any mandatory participant must register for First Stop after they had their application taken for Work First at the Rutherford County Department of Social Services (828-287-6165). The First Stop registration must be within the 12 days of the application date.

**D. Child Care**

In the past we have been fortunate in Rutherford County that our child care allocation has been adequate to accommodate all of the county's child care need. Presently, due to funding issues, we have been forced to maintain a child care waiting list. Our current target populations are as follows:

1. Child Protective Services
2. Employed families who are:
  - Foster Parents/Relative Placements
  - Work First Participants, including job search
  - Other employed families
3. Work First participants in education with another component
4. Teen parents attending High School
5. Child Welfare Services
6. Parents involved in education and training
7. Children with Developmental needs

Work First families will not be placed on a waiting list as long as funds are available.

**E. Transportation**

Rutherford County views this as one of the major obstacles to employment for our Families receiving Work First assistance. We offer a \$75.00 stipend to aid participants with their transportation cost. We will assist in seeking transportation but leave the primary responsibility to each participating family. It is our belief that the individual should assume some of the responsibility themselves in order for them to become self-sufficient and vested in locating a solution to their problem for transportation. The Director of the Department of Social Services serves on the County's Transportation Committee. The Rutherford County Transit system is currently running two public bus routes a day. These routes consist of thirty-eight stops in the areas of Forest City, Spindale and Rutherfordton. Rutherford County uses the Department Of Transportation grant each year to assist Work First families or families under 200% of the Federal poverty level with transportation expenses. This assistance is continued for three months once the individual is employed. Approximately \$17,514.00 of the County ROAP grant will be used to fund this endeavor.

**F. Substance Abuse Services**

The Rutherford County Work First initiative will involve a collaborative effort of the Western Highlands Area Authority and the Rutherford County Department of Social Services (DSS). This collaborative effort will assist in assuring the needs of the local community. As a part of the Work First Substance Abuse Initiative, the Area Authority will provide access to and services from a Qualified Substance Abuse Professional (QSAP) to the local DSS office. The purpose of this service will be to conduct initial screenings for individuals identified through the Work First program as in need of further evaluation. Substance abuse services contracted by the providers shall include but not be limited to: screening, assessment, treatment planning, and referral to other treatment services to include inpatient and residential treatment as well as other local community-based services contracted by the Area Authority. Services provided to individuals, by contracted providers through the Area Authority shall be based upon assessment of a QSAP using nationally recognized criteria.

**G. Family Violence Option**

Rutherford County DSS will continue to work closely with our local PATH (Prevention of Abuse in the Home) Shelter during the assessment, referral and follow-up services for victims of domestic violence. DSS social workers are trained to assist in the domestic violence areas involving both adults and children.

**H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**

Rutherford County plans to fund all Work First case management, Work First eligibility, as well as client support services and activities with the MOE money (\$422,348.00).

**I. Child Welfare Services**

Rutherford County will devote approximately \$669,891.00 out of the Work First Block Grant toward staff, services and activities.

**6. Emergency Assistance: \$5,000.00**

- Have at least one child age 17 or younger living in the home
- Kinship:
  - Parent-natural mother or father, legal or alleged father, or adoptive parent, Blood, half-blood or adoptive relatives, brother, sister, grandparents, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece or first cousin
- Step-relative is limited to: step-parent, step-sister, step-brother
- There must be an unforeseen emergency - i.e. family cannot have caused the emergency in order to become eligible
- Assistance cannot be used for medical care
- Family must reside in Rutherford County with the intent of remaining in North Carolina
- The family must have monthly countable gross income equal to or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level

- Assistance will be provided once in a 12 month consecutive period
- Maximum amount a family can receive is \$300.00
- Assistance must alleviate the emergency and prevent its reoccurrence
- Families may not receive EA if they are being penalized and or sanctioned under the Work First Program.
- Must be a US citizen or a legal alien
- Emergency must be related to families involved in keeping or securing employment
- If family has a intensive CPS case, and there is a recommendation from a Child Welfare worker, EA funds may possibly be used outside of employment emergencies
- Assistance cannot be used for heating and cooling needs.
- Countable reserve limit is \$3000.00 and liquid assets are limited to \$300.00.

### **7. Services to low income families (under 200% of poverty): \$60,500.00**

Rutherford County will utilize the Work First Block Grant to provide services to eligible citizens of the county. Services will be provided to families whose income does not exceed 200% of the poverty level. The employment social workers will evaluate and determine eligibility for these families. Benefit Diversion and 200% of Poverty Assistance will be utilized whenever possible to prevent a Work First application. All services and resources will be explored before a cash application is taken. Prior to applying for 200% services, potential applicants will need to seek assistance with Yokefellow Service Center and Salvation Army Service Unit and provide verification. Services include but are not limited to: education expenses, work related expenses, case management, various counseling, parenting skills, transportation if employed, child and family enrichment, and referrals to day care and skills training. These services are limited to a one time occurrence in a 12 month consecutive time-frame. A \$350 dollar maximum is set for all families. However, in the case of CPS referrals a limit of \$500 can be determined based on a case by case need. Work First participants will be our first priority in assisting with financial resources and employment services. The 200% population will be served as funds allow and there is no harm to our WF population.

### **8. Services to Non-Custodial Parents**

Work First Block Grant funds may be utilized for non-custodial parents whose income does not exceed 200%. A referral process is currently in place between Child Support and Work First staff. The income would be verified at that time. Services offered may include education, work related expenses, case management, and transportation. Transportation costs are only available to individuals who are employed. Priority for funds will be given to Work First participants, while funds for non-custodial parents will be used as the budget allows.

### **9. Exemption from the Work Requirement**

Rutherford County will exempt a single parent for up to 6 months when they have a child under the age of one. We will count a maximum of 3 months from another county when the parent transfers to our county.

The exemption ends once the child reaches 6 months of age (i.e. beginning with the 7<sup>th</sup> month the parent loses this exemption). The parent may receive another 6 month exemption with the next child if the 12 months (federal requirement) has not been met. If the parent fails to cooperate with child support during this exemption time they may not reclaim the exemption for this child once they cooperate.

### **10. Innovative County Strategies**

Rutherford County DSS is committed to the well being of its residents. This plan to reform welfare is intended to assist those who find themselves in a situation of financial need to become self-sufficient. The Work First Program does not foster dependency, but helps families realize their potential for self-sufficiency and achieve the advantages that independence from government income maintenance services offer.

The county is fortunate to have an excellent network between existing county, governmental and non-profit agencies and members of the business, education, health care, and religious communities. These include, but are not limited to, Isothermal Community College, Isothermal Planning and Development Commission, JobLink Career Center, Family Resources, Partnership for Children, Rutherford Hospital, American Red Cross, Rutherford County Schools, and Habitat for Humanity, Forest City Housing Authority, Smart Start, and Section 8 Housing.

North Carolina has been a part of the Career Readiness Certification Consortium (CRCC) – the program is based upon WorkKeys that develop an individual skills. Individuals can be certified on three different levels (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) that indicate level of knowledge in Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information. Utilizing the services offered through Isothermal Planning & Development Commission, participants with a High School diploma will be encouraged to pursue this certification in order to give them a more competitive advantage in the work environment.

Isothermal Community College offers a GED curriculum and an Adult High School Equivalency Degree Program. Rutherford County Schools offer the Even Start Program, which offers parents the opportunity to work toward their GED or high school diploma while their preschoolers attend Head Start or Even Start classrooms. Parents are given opportunity during the day to interact with their children while progressing through their schoolwork. Even Start makes bi-monthly home visits to emphasize parenting skills, literacy in the home, and parent-child interaction. Work First participants are referred to these educational programs because of our emphasis on the role of education in achieving self-sufficiency.

Family Resources, a United Way agency, administers several area programs including local children's home, an abused women's shelter, and an accredited Consumer Credit Counseling office that offers financial management services to low-income families. Local benevolent organizations, including the Yokefellow Center, Corner Ministries and the Salvation Army, are also very active in providing assistance and services to those

demonstrating need. First Call for Help is used as a referral service as they maintain a current list of all private and public resources available within the county.

Rutherford County DSS is home to an outstanding Career/Work Center, which offers training programs that focus on the basic skills needed to become job-ready.

Rutherford County's Plan acknowledges the reality that individuals and families cannot become self-sufficient unless a cycle of self-destructive behavior is broken. Accordingly, the Plan's administering agency will work closely with the Area Authority staff in identifying and treating substance abuse and with the Rutherford County Health Department to promote wellness, preventative health measures and responsible family planning.

Rutherford DSS makes referral to the Health Department for the following services:

- Case management for pregnant women and for families whose children are age birth to three
- Pregnancy prevention for teenagers and adults
- Prenatal care
- Child birth education
- Multi vitamin program to prevent birth defects
- Immunization and well check up for Work First families
- Dental Varnish Program for children up until age 36 months
- Dental Clinic for children
- Post-Partum and New born home visits
- Communicable Disease/STD/HIV counseling, testing and treatment
- Breast and Cervical Cancer Program
- A dental hygiene program is provided in the local schools

Rutherford County operates a JobLink Career Center in Forest City. Referrals are made to the JobLink for employment opportunities; resume writing and Job Club meetings. Work First/HR Placement Specialist is co-located at JobLink one half day a week. A resource room is also available at the JobLink, which includes: computers, newspapers, videos, software and books.

Referrals are made to the Clara Allen Center which offers a Domestic Abuse Education Program. This is a 26-week program that works with the male and female offenders. Our PATH shelter offers a six week women's only non-offender domestic violence program. Referrals are made from Work First workers, court officials and CPS workers.

Many of our Work First participants are involved in work experience with several of our community partners. These provide many opportunities for the participants to learn valuable work related skills. Exit Interviews will be conducted thru surveys with our community partners and participants in order to determine if alternative work experience and/or community service is needed to determine the best possible placement.

### **11. Special Issues**

Rutherford County's Work First caseload has drastically changed since 1996 and continues to evolve with the changes in our federal laws, state laws, and local economy. Our main concerns are economic disadvantages, educational deficiencies of the consumer, domestic violence and mental health issues (including substance dependency and abuse). We will use all available resources to ensure that the families get the help or treatment that they need. Families must face and overcome these critical issues in order to be productive members of the workforce and achieve self-sufficiency. All available resources will be used to this end. With the new changes that will be implemented as a result of the Deficit Reduction Act 2005, changes to this plan will be made accordingly.

### **12. Certification**

I, Chivous Bradley, Chairman of the Board, do hereby certify that the Work First Plan 2008-2010 was approved with revisions at a meeting of the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners duly held on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2008.

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Chivous Bradley, Chairman  
Rutherford County Board of Commissioners

Attest:

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## Attachment I

**Memorandum of Understanding**

## First Stop Employment Assistance Program

Pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 108A-29(a2), the undersigned parties hereby acknowledge that the point of registration in Rutherford County for the First Stop Employment Assistance Program shall be the office of the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina located as set forth below.

139 E. Trade Street  
Forest City, NC 28043  
Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Employment Security Commission  
of North Carolina

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Sandra Miller, Manager

Rutherford County DSS

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John Carroll, Director

Signed this date September 19, 2008

## Attachment II

**Protocol for Family Violence Option  
Rutherford County Department of Social Services**

The purpose of this plan is to establish the procedures social services staff will follow in dealing with victims of family violence. It will be a common agreement on how to proceed and interact in the best interest of families who are experiencing or who have experienced family violence in the past. The concepts and central assumptions of this process are:

1. Family violence is a serious problem with lasting consequences for victims, their children and the community as a whole.
2. Family violence is a common problem that is the responsibility of the whole community to acknowledge and to correct.
3. No two family violence cases are alike. The causes are many, complex and involve complex family dynamics.
4. Family violence can hinder families who are attempting to move toward self-sufficiency.
5. Until violence in the family is dealt with the family unit may not be able to function properly.
6. A long-term solution ensuring the safety of the victim and the children is the primary goal.
7. Counseling for all household members is important and should be provided.
8. It is essential to the success of this protocol that open and on-going communication and cooperation exist among the agencies involved in the delivery of family violence services.
9. It is understood that this is a dynamic and flexible document and that it will be reviewed periodically and revised to reflect changing laws, policies, and community issues.

**Procedures:**

All clients served may be experiencing or may have in the past experienced family violence. Work First families in Rutherford County will be notified of their right to receive assistance to deal with the problem of family violence. They will also be notified of the Family Violence option Waiver. The notification tool is Attachment 1. All workers will notify clients whom they are working with of their rights. Each individual will be given a copy of this form and one will be placed in his or her record.

- If participant screens positive or self disclose family violence, they will be referred to the Social Work staff that will proceed from this point. The Social Worker will complete the screening for domestic violence form (Attachment 2).
- If the answer to any question is yes, the client should be referred for a complete assessment. Referrals will be made to PATH within 5 workdays of self-disclosure or positive screening.

The Social Worker will inform the participant that a temporary waiver of some or all of the work requirements under TANF may be granted based on the assessment. Trained staff at PATH will make recommendations to the DSS Social Worker who will then make a determination concerning the waiver request.

- If the individual refuses the service they will be made aware that no waiver can be given due to family violence.



- If the individual accepts the referral and an appointment are made the Confidentiality Release of Information Form (Attachment 3) will be completed and sent to PATH.

PATH will then complete the Assessment form DSS 6965 (Attachment 4). This will be returned to the DSS Social Worker within 5 days of the assessment.

- If the assessment indicates that there has been or currently is violence in the home, PATH will proceed to work with the individual in developing a safety plan. Information from these documents will be shared as is necessary with the appropriate staff.
- PATH will report back to the DSS Social Worker their recommendations and the ability of the individual to fulfill Work First requirements, activities to remove barriers, time frame needed and if a waiver is being requested.
- A new MRA may be necessary and will be developed when recommendations are different from previous MRA.
- Granting of the waiver rests with DSS staff
- If a waiver is requested from PATH the DSS Social Worker will consult with them concerning this request. The Social Worker and his/her supervisor will make a determination within 10 days of receipt of assessment report.
- The waiver period may range from 1 month to 6 months. Determinations will be made on a case-by-case basis. Waivers will be reviewed regularly but no less than at 3 and 6 months. Waivers may be continued after the initial time period, if the reassessment indicated that this is needed.
- A private meeting will then be scheduled to notify the Work First participant of the decision. At this time a new MRA will be developed.

Procedures for couples that are being served together:

- Never screen or send for an assessment together.
- Find some other activity for the “non-victim” while the potential victim is being screened or assessed if at all possible.
- Never inform the “no-victim” that the partner is being assessed for family violence.
- If necessary, reschedule the victim for an appointment without the partner.

When working with a victim there are several items to keep in mind.

- Never release the address or telephone number of a victim to anyone.
- Subterfuge may be necessary when scheduling a victim who is still residing with the batterer. Never tell the batterer that the victim is going through family violence activities.
- Take care before sanctioning a victim for non-compliance. It may be that the batterer is preventing her from participating.
- Work closely with PATH. They will be able to provide guidance about safe activities for the victim.

Rutherford County Department of Social Services recognizes the need for confidentiality in any case and the extreme importance of confidentiality in cases dealing with family violence. Information will only be shared on a need to know basis for the protection of the Work First families and DSS staff.

